

THE AMERICAN MEDICAL LITERATURE

HAVE we a national medical literature? If so, what are its nature and extent?

It required no labored argument to answer these questions. Undoubtedly we have a national medical literature; but that its character and extent are not what they should be, or what we hope they ultimately will be, is equally true. It is an immature, an infantile literature, destitute of bone, and muscle, and sinew, gradually but steadily developing itself, and destined, ere long, to take its place by the side of that of other nations. Literature, regarded in the abstract, has, like the arts and sciences, nay, like governments and nations, its rise and progress, its trials and difficulties, its prosperity, its decline, and its downfall. It does not, Minerva-like, spring in full vigor and perfection from the brain of the heathen god. It does not send forth its rich and fertilizing influences at once upon a people. Its ascent is gradual, its growth tardy, often, indeed, almost imperceptible. To this rule the medical literature of the world forms no exception. What it is, and what it has been, it has become by slow degrees, by hard labor, by indomitable zeal for the national welfare and the national honor. The medical literature of America was conceived in adversity, rocked in the cradle of sorrow, and reared on a diet of bread and water; and yet, as will appear by and by, it is not destitute of value to the possessor, or without honor to the giver. Young as it is, and beset as its progress has been, and still is, with trials and perplexities, it is a living fountain to our profession, from which all who thirst may drink and be refreshed; as a mine of precious ore, abounding in the golden sands of science and erudition. If it lacks the stately proportions of the medical literature of some of the more refined and cultivated nations of Europe, it possesses the vigor of a healthy and steady growth, surely, though slowly, advancing to the full maturity of a sound and sturdy manhood. . . .

Gross, Samuel D.: Report on the causes which impeded the progress of American medical literature. *Trans. A.M.A.*

9: 339-62, 1856.